

Testimony in support of SB 167
January 15, 2009

SENATE AGRICULTURE
EXHIBIT NO. 4
DATE 1-15-09
BILL NO. SB167

Presented by:
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I'd like to thank Senator Zinke for introducing and sponsoring this bill, and the Livestock, Agriculture and Irrigation Committee for this hearing.

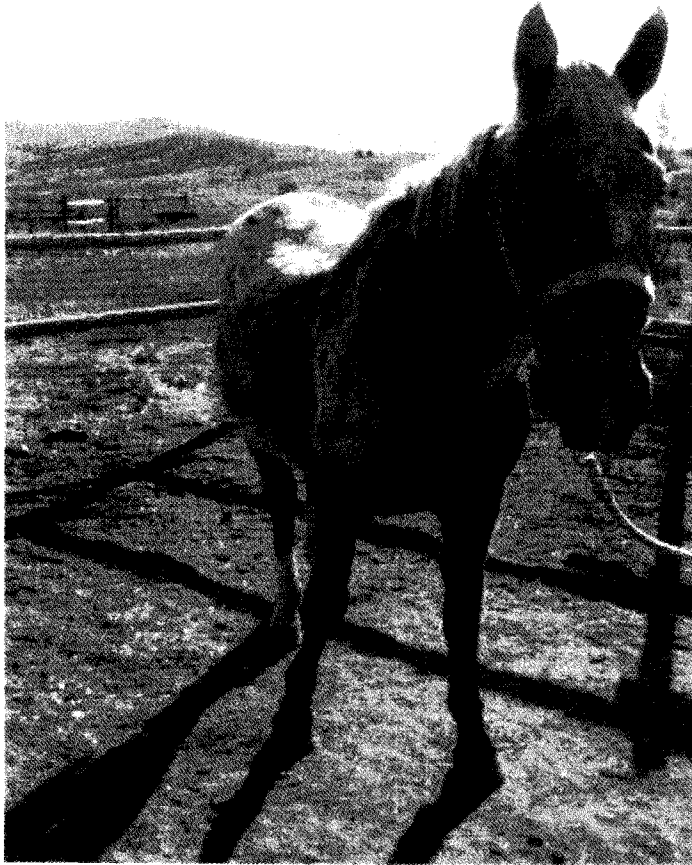
My name is Jane Heath and I am the executive director of Montana Horse Sanctuary and have been a professional equine therapist for 13 years. I have lived in Montana all my life and have been involved with horses since I was eight. I'm here today to support the passage of Senate Bill 167.

In my profession I rehabilitate starved, abused and abandoned horses. In all cases these horses have suffered immeasurably. Horses, like all animals, are sensitive beings who feel pain and suffering. Starvation and other forms of physical abuse often result in on-going health issues which may take a long time to resolve or may even last throughout the rest of a horse's life.

Horse ownership is a big responsibility and it is a choice. Abusing or abandoning a horse is a very serious action and in every case is one which the horse owner chose to commit.

You may hear testimony today from opponents to this bill who will tell you that by passing this bill the legislature will be paving the way for animals rights activists to put the livestock industry out of business. This simply isn't so. Passage of other animal cruelty statutes during previous legislative sessions has not resulted in damage to Montana's ranches and farms.

I urge you to help law enforcement agencies in Montana to better enforce equine cruelty cases with the passage of Senate Bill 167. Thank you.



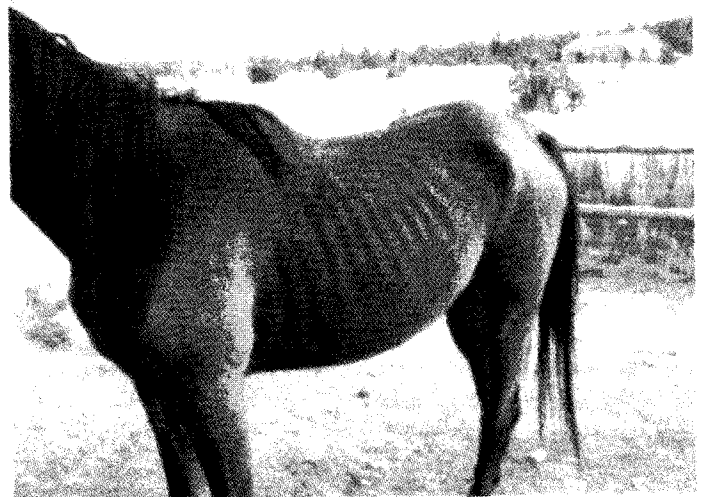
Dottie the day she arrived at the Sanctuary

Dottie arrived at Montana Horse Sanctuary in late June 2008. Within three months she was back to a normal weight and the vet said her health was good.

Starving horses often ingest dirt and sand to quiet their stomach. Dirt and sand Dottie ingested during the time her owner starved her was resting inside her intestines. In early October Dottie developed colic (an upset stomach), the dirt and sand moved through the intestine to a place where it could not pass and Dottie died of sand colic because of the previous abuse. A post-mortem exam revealed impacted sand greater than the volume of a football.

Jusin arrived at Montana Horse Sanctuary in September 2008 after being confiscated by the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office. When the Sheriff's office found him, he was standing near his starved, dead pasturemate.

Although he showed indications of previous training and loaded into the Department of Livestock trailer, Justin was skittish and afraid of people. Justin is part of an ongoing court case. It took four months of gentle, consistent handling before Justin could let us easily approach and halter him. He is still very much afraid of certain men. Today he is finally back to a normal weight and his health is good. We hope that over time Justin will be able to trust all people.



Justin the day he arrived at the Sanctuary